DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 513 CS 211 915

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TITLE Conferencing: Assessing Growth and Change in Student's Writing.
INSTITUTION New Jersey State Dept. of Education, Trenton. Div. of General Academic Education.
PUB DATE Jun 86
NOTE 89p.
AVAILABLE FROM New Jersey State Department of Education, Distribution Services, 225 West State St., CN500, Trenton, NJ 08625 ($3.75 prepaid).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS High Schools; Intermediate Grades; Peer Teaching; *Teacher Student Relationship; Teaching Methods; *Writing Evaluation; Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes
IDENTIFIERS New Jersey; *Teacher Student Conferences; Writing Assignments

ABSTRACT

This booklet presents three practical procedures for conferencing to help upper elementary and high school teachers evaluate students' language development while teaching students how to regulate and participate more fully in the process of writing. The booklet includes the following chapters: (1) "The Interaction of Thought and Language"; (2) "Assessing Student Progress in Writing within the Educational Setting"; (3) "Conferencing: Three Methods"; (4) "Conferencing with the Teacher"; (4) "Conferencing without the Teacher"; and (5) "Strategies for the Self and Peer Methods." Four appendixes contain supplementary information on assessment/evaluation; checklists/checkpoints; procedures; and coding. A four-page bibliography is also attached. (MS)

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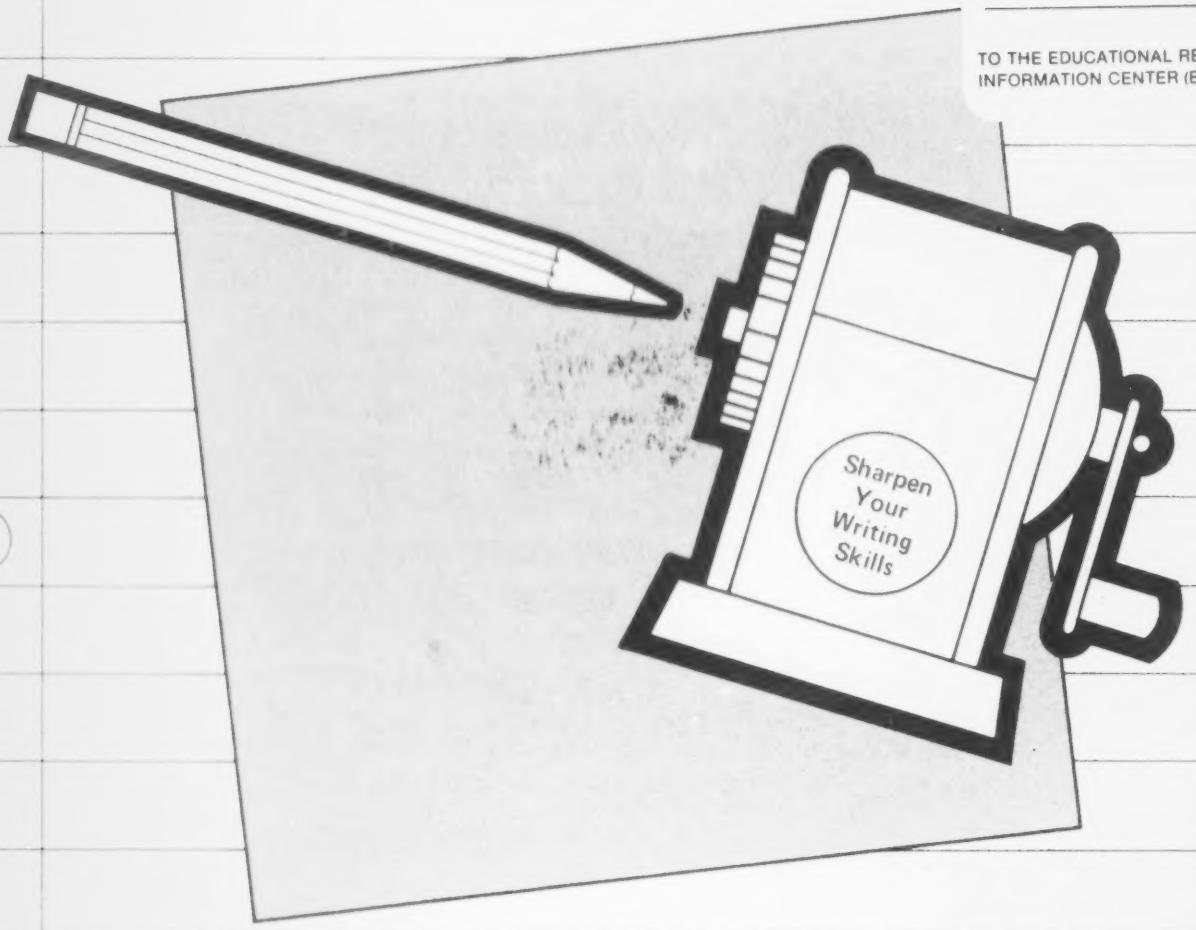

Assessing Growth and Change in Students' Writing

TESTING LEARNING TEACHING

New Jersey Department of Education, Division of General Academic Education

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CONFERENCING:

ASSESSING GROWTH AND CHANGE IN STUDENTS' WRITING

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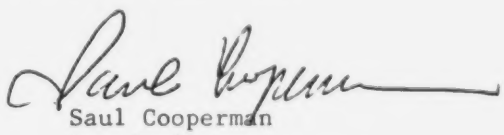
FOREWORD

In 1979 the New Jersey State Legislature mandated the assessment of students' writing proficiency. The department first administered a writing test to all ninth grade students in 1982-83. The writing examination, which consists of both multiple choice questions and an essay, is now part of the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT).

The department has published several documents to assist school personnel in preparing their students to master the skills assessed on the HSPT. Conferencing: Assessing Growth and Change in Students' Writing is a resource document for upper elementary and high school teachers who are responsible for evaluating students' language development. The document is based on the premise that students need to become both audience and critics of their own writing. The materials and strategies in this publication have been successfully field-tested in training and classroom situations.

I commend these materials to the attention of administrators and teachers. I believe that they will find in them some ideas for new approaches which, together with their own commitment and hard work, will contribute to better education for New Jersey students.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks are expressed to the many professionals whose valuable cooperation, assistance, and advice contributed to the production of this document.

For their cooperation in implementing and providing written feedback on instructional strategies, thanks are extended to Hamilton Township School District staff: Dr. Michael Tovino, Ms. Gail Dickson, Ms. Bonnie J. Grocott, Ms. Kathryn E. Mascherin, Ms. Jane D. Perna, Ms. Lynn Rich, Mr. Robert D. Stadler, Ms. Esther A. Zamorski, Ms. Antoinette M. Zimmerman, Ms. Anna Maria Agliata, Ms. Mary V. Ascher, and Dr. Patricia Ann Barber, and to North Brunswick Township School District staff: Dr. Carol Kramer, Mrs. Barbara Pakenham, Mrs. Regina Rudolph and Mr. Walter Sikorski.

Special thanks are extented to those who participated in the Voc-Ed Summer Work-Study Program offered by the New Jersey State Department of Education's Division of Vocational Education, particularly to Dr. Lois McGuire and Ms. Joyce Nestle at Bayonne Public Schools and Mr. Frank Zaccaria, Ms. Bonnie Casapulla and Ms. June E. Morgan at Passaic County Technical-Vocational High School.

Sincere thanks are extended to John Dougherty and Susan Shanik of the Department of Education for their input on teacher and peer conferencing, and to June Birnbaum, RCSU-Central; Rosemary Howell, RCSU-South; and Anne Wilkins, RCSU-North for their advice, support and review of this document. Special acknowledgement is also extended to Florence Cucchi, Division of General Academic Education, editing.

Thanks and appreciation of their work are also extended to the Word Processing Specialists, Division of Administration, who typed the numerous drafts of the document and to Debbie Csogi for her graphic work.

CONTENTS

Section		Page
I.	**Introduction**	1
II.	**The Interaction of Thought and Language**	3
	The Value and Role of Language	3
	Writing Proficiency - A Premise for Language Competence and Assessment	3
III.	**Assessing Student Progress in Writing Within the Educational Setting**	5
	Definition of Terms	5
	Multiple Approaches to Assessing Students' Writing	5
	Assessment Methods That Tell About Students' Writing	6
	Educators Have Choices	11
IV.	**Conferencing: Three Methods**	17
	Planning A Successful Writing Conference	17
V.	**Conferencing with the Teacher**	19
	Individual Student/Teacher Conference	19
	• Role Playing	19
	• Error Analysis	20
	• Tape Recorder Commentary	22
	Student Group/Teacher Conference	22
VI.	**Conferencing Without the Teacher**	23
	The Self Method	24
	• The Self-Questioning Technique	24
	• Reading Aloud to Oneself	25
	• Tape Recording Self	26
	The Peer Method	26
	• Elements of Successful Interactions Among Students.	26
VII.	**Strategies for the Self and Peer Methods**	29
	Checklists	29
	Peer Conferencing	29
	• Variation I: Editorial Groups	30
	• Variation II: Designated Editor	30
	• Variation III: Timed Commentary	31

Page

- Variation IV: Summary - Observation..... 31
- Variation V: Focused Feedback Sheets..... 31
- Variation VI: Rotating Tasks..... 31

Pairing..... 32
- Variation I: Vertical Sharing..... 32
- Variation II: Pencil Pal..... 32
- Variation III: Questions - Solutions..... 32

Coding..... 33
- Variation I: Evaluation - Solution Cards..... 33
- Variation II: Text Keys..... 34
- Variation III: Schoolwide Proofreading Code..... 34

Oral Reading..... 35
Publishing and Displaying..... 35
Computers..... 35

VIII. **Conclusion**..... 37

Appendices

- Appendix A: Assessment/Evaluation 39
- Appendix B: Checklists/Checkpoints..... 45
- Appendix C: Procedures..... 59
- Appendix D: Coding..... 67

Glossary..... 73

Bibliography..... 79

Documents Published by NJSDE..... 83

Feedback Form..... 85

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

> **The history of educational reform suggests that effective change requires more than a new textbook; it has to begin with the recognition that education, too, is a process, complex, frustrating, exciting and ultimately dependent upon the individual teacher faced with the individual pupil, rather than the sequence of materials we present in a book. (Applebee, 1979)**

Both educators and citizens recognize that an individual who fails to achieve competence in language and the tools of communication faces life with a handicap. Therefore, in response to state legislation passed in 1979, the New Jersey Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education established a statewide writing test as a component of the ninth grade New Jersey High School Proficiency Test (HSPT). Motivated by the implementation of the HSPT and by national reports expressing concern about writing skill achievement (Boyer, 1983; Odell, 1981), educators have sought to develop or extend their district-wide writing programs. Two important components of these programs are the development and the evaluation of students' overall language skills. Educators have come to recognize that evaluation provides critical feedback to both teachers and students. Information from the evaluation process can assist teachers in understanding which instructional strategies, materials and/or methods are effective in teaching students to write, while it informs the student about his or her skill as a writer.

For writing, evaluation is ongoing and best achieved by getting students involved in the process. The **CONFERENCING APPROACH** is an evaluation method that stresses student involvement in the evaluation process and ensuring student understanding of the criteria used to evaluate writing. When teachers involve students in the evaluation process, they have attained one of the important goals of a successful writing program: students have become both audience and critic of their own writing.

Although teachers and supervisors already employ many of the evaluation methods herein described, this document aims to:

1) inform educators that evaluation serves as feedback for both teachers and students;

2) provide educators with a variety of evaluation methods;

3) promote consistency among educators in their approach to the evaluation of students' progress in language development and writing.

A consistent evaluation approach in the classroom clarifies students' expectations and makes it easier for students and teachers to set goals and know when they have been reached.

This document presents three practical procedures for conferencing to help upper elementary and high school teachers evaluate students' language development while teaching students how to regulate and participate more fully in the process of writing.

SECTION II

THE INTERACTION OF THOUGHT AND LANGUAGE

> How do I know what I think until I see what I say?
> (E.M. Forster)

> Writing has got to be an act of discovery ... I write to find out what I'm thinking about.
> (Edward Albee)

The Value and Role of Language

Students who come to our schools for a formal education bring to the learning environment a history of experience that includes knowledge, feelings, perceptions, memories and language. In school, students need to recognize the value and role of language in learning. Language is a means toward self-understanding and personal growth and students need to understand both its practical and aesthetic values. Language is a means of discovery and a means of communication.

Students communicate ideas to others orally and through writing, and they communicate to themselves through speaking, listening, reading and writing. One reward for an educator is the satisfaction that results from helping individuals grow in their ability to communicate.

Language development is complicated by multiplicity of meanings and word usage functions. Instruction and evaluation, therefore, must center on helping students make sense of and use the spoken and written language (Smith, 1982). Since language is essential for learning and cognition, it is imperative for educators to understand that students must learn to use spoken and written language successfully. (See Understanding the Writing Process: Introducing Students to Composing, New Jersey State Department of Education, 1985).

Writing Proficiency - A Premise For Language Competence and Assessment

> When people work to develop communication competence, they are concerned with "putting language to work" for them in the following ways: (1) enlarging their repertoire of communication arts; (2) selecting criteria for making choices from the repertoire; (3) implementing the communication acts chosen; and (4) evaluating the effectiveness of communication employed.
> (Wood, 1977)

Writing proficiency entails more than students' mastery of the conventions of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and usage. While there are several textbook definitions of writing proficiency, most ignore the fact that in order to write effectively one must have something to communicate. During the process of writing, the proficient writer expects to make choices and appropriate adjustments for the reader to understand the message that the writer wishes to communicate.

Writing is not a series of discrete rules that have been mastered or skills that have been attained. Rather, it is the process of transforming thought into written symbols and, sometimes, transforming thought through the process. Writing proficiency refers to "the ability to discover what one wishes to say and to convey one's message through language, syntax, and content that are appropriate for one's audience and purpose." (Odell, 1981).

SECTION III

ASSESSING STUDENT PROGRESS IN WRITING WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Definition of Terms

There are two methods to measure students' success and level of proficiency in writing. One is known as **assessment** and the other as **evaluation. Assessment** is a process that describes the status of students' writing ability at a particular time without value judgment. **Evaluation** is a process that measures students' writing ability in reference to a standard and assigns a value to the student's performance. Assessment provides diagnosis; evaluation describes and judges the effectiveness of a process, product or program. In evaluation, recommendations for a preferred course of action are included.

Both assessment and evaluation can provide feedback throughout the writing process. Critical to all forms of effective communication, feedback on student writing is important to both the teacher and the student. It helps the teacher understand which instructional strategies, materials, and/or methods are effective in teaching students to write, and it informs the student as to his/her skill as a writer. Valuable feedback, however, is more than "Excellent," "Good Work," "Confusing," etc., written across the top of the paper.

In order to benefit the student progress, feedback must provide brief but specific and detailed comments to students. The long-term goal in the teaching of writing is to have students learn how to work within a process of planning, drafting, and revising. The teacher should explain and model how to engage in and gain control over each of these processes. The major causes of ineffective teacher response are that the teachers fail to acknowledge what the writer conveyed, to involve the writer in critiquing for revisions, and to acknowledge the reasons for their own reactions. (Hagaman, 1980) Student-focused assessment, therefore, is not so much a matter of evaluating the student's written work as it is a task of evaluating the student writer at work and of using principles of successful communication.

Multiple Approaches to Assessing Student Writing

There are two major ways to assess student writing skills in the classroom. The **DIRECT APPROACH** focuses on a student's writing sample or the student writer's behavior within the stages of the writing process. In contrast, the **INDIRECT APPROACH** relies on short answer questions that are empirically related to writing proficiency, but do not require the student to demonstrate an actual written response. Either approach may be formal or informal (See Figure 1).

In **formal evaluation,** the teacher selects one of many published standardized, norm-referenced or criterion-referenced measures to evaluate students' writing skills directly or indirectly. Currently there are only one or two commerical test publishers who publish measures to assess students' writing proficiency in a **formal direct mode**. These measures provide essay topics based on norm-referenced data. (See Psychological Corporation, CBT/McGraw-Hill and Riverside Press.) **Informal evaluation** focuses on teacher-student and/or student-student interaction through process-oriented methods and techniques for assessing and managing students' progress. In the informal approach, each written assignment requires a compatible method of evaluation. The teacher establishes with the student criteria against which the student will be evaluated. Using informal evaluation the teacher must consider both the student's level of language development as well as the goals set for the program. Appendix I - Assessment/Evaluation provides a series of questions a teacher/supervisor needs to consider when selecting a method to evaluate students' writing performance.

Assessment Methods That Tell About Student Writing

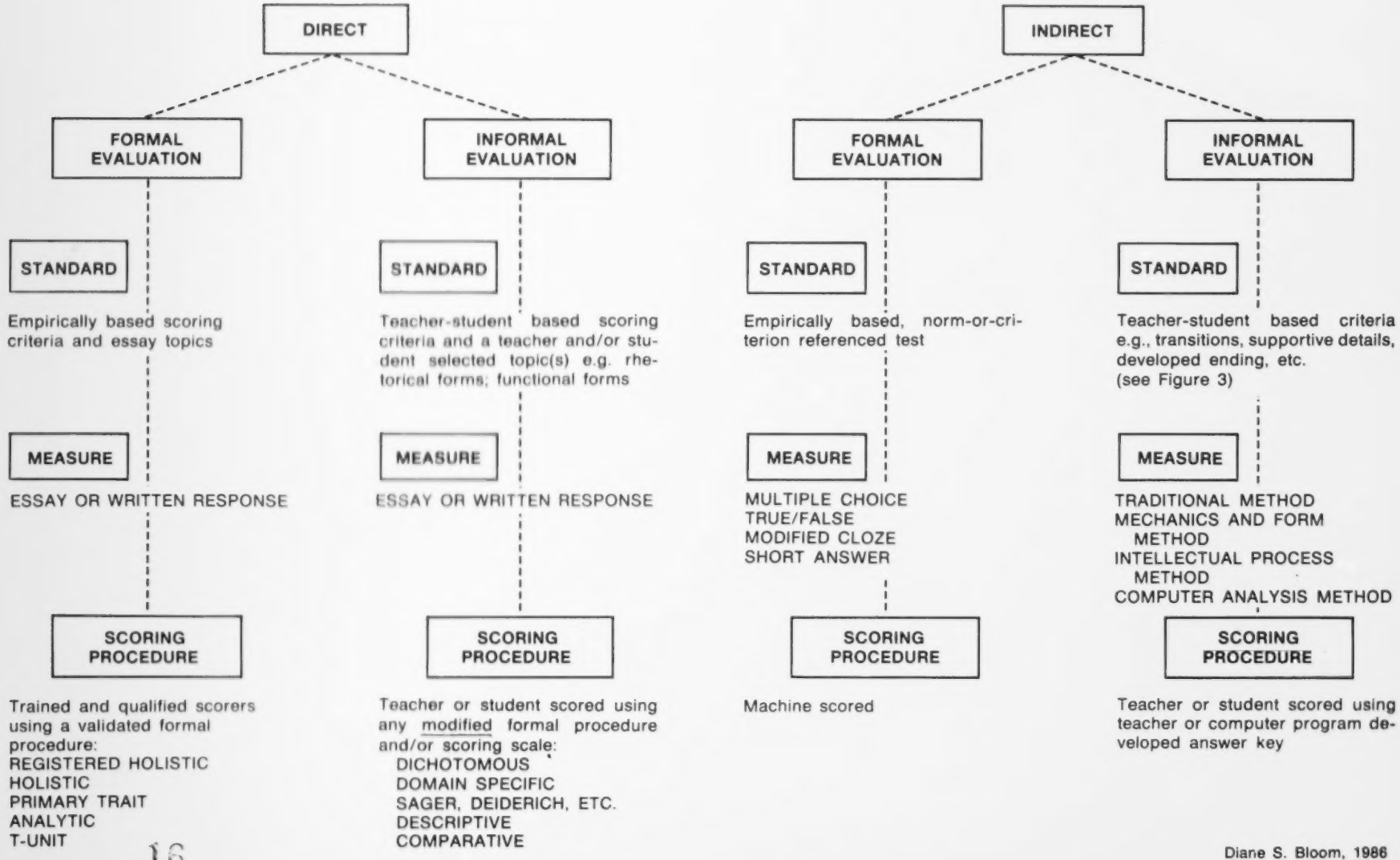
The direct method of assessing student writing ability involves assessing actual student writing while the indirect method relies on objective measures. Such assessments are considered formal when the methods of test construction, implementation and scoring occur within secured and controlled contexts that ensure test validity and reliability. These direct assessment methods, however, can be used in the classroom under informal conditions and adapted to teacher and/or student established criteria. Direct scoring procedures now in popular use include: holistic, primary trait, analytic, T-unit analysis and writing mechanics. Each of these is described below:

- holistic scoring requires that the reader allow all aspects of a piece of writing to influence judgment of the total effect of the composition. The reader scores the composition based upon a general or overall impression of its quality.

- primary trait scoring identifies a dominant or primary characteristic for each writing task, and compositions are rated according to how well they fulfill the purpose of that particular task. For example, descriptive essays might require detailed character descriptions while narrative essays may require a specific chronological order of events.

- analytic scoring requires the reader to isolate particular composition characteristics such as topic, rhetorical mode (narration, persuasion, etc.), organization, fluency, etc., and to judge each characteristic without being influenced by any other characteristic. Analytic scoring often is used when there is a need for specific, discrete information about writers' strengths and weaknesses.

FIGURE 1
MULTIPLE APPROACHES TO ASSESSING STUDENT WRITING



Diane S. Bloom, 1986

- T-unit analysis judges writing maturity by examining the syntactic complexity of the sentences produced. Students' writing is divided into T-units (independent clauses with all their subordinate clauses or phrases) and the units are analyzed for length, number of words, etc. The method can also be used by having students combine a group of related T-units into one or more sentences so that the maturity of the writer is judged (Hunt, 1965).

- writing mechanics analysis is "error-focused" and offers no feedback on what is written, that is, on context or organization. This method indicates errors in usage or mechanical conventions of standard English and is appropriate when the student is at a point in language development where attention to such matters is important.

A comparison of the five methods of direct assessment of writing performance was developed by Spandel and Stiggens (1980). This comparison of procedures is included for the reader's convenience. In their chart the methods are compared in relation to their general capabilities, reliability, preparation time, reader or rater qualifications, scoring time, classroom application, types of performance reporting allowed and size of the scoring samples. See Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

A COMPARISON OF SCORING METHODS FOR
DIRECT WRITING ASSESSMENT*

Description	Holistic	Analytic	Primary Trait	Writing Mechanics	T-Unit Analysis
General Capabilities	Comprehensive general picture of student perfomance; writing viewed as a unified coherent whole. Applicable to any writing task.	Thorough, trait-by-trait analysis of writing; provides comprehensive picture of performance if enough traits are analyzed; traits are those important to any piece of writing in any situation (e.g., organization, wording, mechanics).	Highly focused analysis of situation-specific primary trait (and possibly secondary traits); provides specific information on a narrowly defined writing task (e.g., ability to recount details in chronological order).	Can provide either a general or a specific profile of the student's ability to use mechanics properly.	Provides a measure of syntactic sophistication.
Reliability	High reliability if standards are carefully established and raters are carefully trained.	High reliability if criteria and standards are well-defined and careful training is conducted.	High reliability if criteria and standards are well-defined and careful training is conducted.	High reliability if given sufficient training time and authoritative, complete, acceptable guidelines (e.g., an English Handbook).	High reliability provided trained and experienced raters are used.
Preparation Time	Up to one day per item to identify range finder (model) papers; up to one-half day to train readers using 4 or 6 point scale; full day to train with 8-point scale.	One full day to identify traits; one day per trait to develop scoring unless traits and criteria are borrowed from another source; one to two days to review results of pilot test and refine traits or criteria as necessary; one-half day to train raters.	One full day to identify traits; one day per trait to develop scoring (unless traits and criteria are borrowed from another source); one to two days to review results of pilot test and refine traits or criteria as necessary; one-half day to train raters.	One to two days to set up a scoring system (unless borrowed from another source). Minimum of one day to internalize the scoring system and practice scoring.	Half day to full day, depending on raters' previous experience.

Figure 2 (continued)

Description	Holistic	Analytic	Primary Trait	Writing Mechanics	T-Unit Analysis
Readers	Qualified language arts personnel recommended: high reliability can be achieved with non-language arts readers given sufficient training.	Qualified language arts personnel recommended.	Qualified language arts personnel recommended; non-language arts staff may be able to score some traits.	Qualified language arts personnel recommended.	Raters must be experienced language arts personnel, preferably those already familiar with the concept of T-unit analysis.
Scoring Time	One to two minutes per paper(experienced readers may read faster).	One to two minutes per paper trait.	One to two minutes per paper trait.	Five minutes or more per paper, depending on number of criteria.	Varies greatly, depending on raters' skills.
Classroom Use	May be adapted for use in class.	May be adapted for use in class.	May be adapted for use in class.	May be adapted for use in class.	May be adapted for use in class.
Reporting	Allows reporting of students' overall writing skills.	Allows reporting of student performance on a wide range of generalized traits (i.e., the qualities considered important to all good writing).	Allows reporting of student performance on one or more situation-specific traits important to a particular task.	Allows reporting of group or individual data on students' general strengths or weaknesses in mechanics.	Allows group or individual reporting on syntactical sophistication.
Group/Sample Size	Primarily usable with a larger sample; with a smaller sample, responses may be difficult to scale.	Best with smaller samples; extensive scoring time may make costs prohibitive with larger groups.	Generally more cost-effective with smaller samples, depending on the number of traits to be scored (with one trait, sample size is not an issue).	Best with small samples; extensive scoring time may make costs prohibitive with larger groups.	Best with smaller samples; extensive scoring time may make costs prohibitive with larger groups.

*from Direct Measures of Writing Skill: Issues and Applications by Vicki Spandel and Richard J. Stiggins, NWREL, Portland, OR, 1980.

Educators Have Choices

When selecting an assessment method the teacher must consider three major principles to guide his/her choice. (Holdzkom, 1982).

Principle I

Although there are mandates for statewide tests and district-selected standardized tests, teachers still need to view themselves as having real choices.

Who knows their students' academic abilities better than classroom teachers? Within the classroom, instruction and evaluation can be structured to allow for implementation of several informal, direct methods of evaluation as well as formal, indirect methods. Such methods can provide valuable information about students' progress in language development and writing while spending less class time on "final" product evaluation and more class time on instruction.

Within the classroom setting, many teachers already use many informal methods to evaluate students' writing. Figure 3 summarizes five informal methods currently in use. There are also other methods in use, of course, such as tutorial evaluation and public evaluation, which are described in a number of sources (Smelstor, 1978; Hartnett, 1978). Regardless of the method chosen, the evaluation must focus on the positive since students' writing is intensely personal.

Principle II

It is not absolutely essential for the teacher to evaluate all the writing students do.

Along the continuum of language development students require varying degrees of feedback. It is important that students be given many opportunities to address all functions or reasons for writing and be evaluated while they are writing. Moreover, students need instruction focused on their writing while writing. It is far more important for students to write often for many audiences and purposes, than it is for teachers to read and evaluate every piece. More teacher time spent on evaluating writers' work during the process of writing means less time reviewing the finished product. In addition, student proficiency becomes the by-product.

Principle III

> Writing belongs to the writer and with respect to writing in the classroom, the teacher responds to students through a variety of roles. (Gundlach, 1981)

Since written communication is dependent upon author intent, it is crucial to student's understanding of the writing process that they be actively involved in the stages through which quality communication evolves. The teacher has to restrain himself/herself from providing content, and take care not to inhibit the students from finding their own forms and their own language (Murray, 1979). The teacher must allow students to talk about their writing and not seize ownership and control (Graves, 1983). When the teacher maintains the control, students lose the essence of the writing process: writer initiative and writer involvement.

Robert Gundlach has identified six roles that teachers should play in relationship to their students as writers. Teachers can function as:

1. Appreciative Audience and react as interested readers.
2. Collaborating Editors and write with students.
3. Publishers and show the writer's work to other readers.
4. Archivists and file work for future reference.
5. Educator/Trainers and coach and guide the writer.
6. Evaluators and assess and judge the quality of writing and the progress it indicates.

How the teacher responds to and interacts with a student has a direct influence on how that student learns. Collaborative writing for the purpose of student-focused assistance is a powerful teaching behavior. The teacher who writes with the students provides an exclusive model for students and an incentive for them to write. In addition, the teacher who experiences the act and the joy of writing in the classroom with students will have a better understanding of the writing process and, hence, will have more to teach. (Peckham, 1983). It is suggested that teachers themselves, as collaborating editors, write frequently and submit their writing to their students for evaluation. The teacher who writes can experience the same difficulties that students face with frequently assigned writing assignments. Teachers may even discover that certain assignments cause or aggravate these difficulties. The teacher can develop an acute awareness of the difficulty of facing the blank page, describing the summer storm, the best friend, etc., and make adjustments in instruction and assignments to help students overcome these difficulties.

Writing with students actively involves teachers in coaching and guiding the writer, giving and receiving feedback, rather than passively waiting to receive the written product from the student.

The teacher who writes with students tends to provide more opportunities for student writing within a more natural atmosphere. In such an atmosphere, students can more readily learn that writing is a natural process which can and should be pleasurable and growth-enhancing. Writing does not occur in a vacuum, or by direction during regular "creative writing class periods." Rather, it occurs in a context of personal experience, thought and discussion. In such an atmosphere, teachers will recognize that students' written products often emerge as crude first attempts to express one's thoughts which must be developed through interaction and feedback to finished products. The teacher in the role of educator/trainer needs to build a relationship of trust with students so that they feel it is all right to take risks and express themselves more freely. If students view the teacher only as an evaluator of their attempts at communication, they will quickly learn to spend their time trying to find out what it is that the teacher wants rather than engage in an experience that can be both writer-centered and audience-centered.

The teacher has an interactive role with the student writer while that student is planning, drafting, revising and editing his/her work. The teacher actively manages the learning environment and affords students the classroom opportunity to write, so the student writer becomes more aware of audience, purpose, organization and content; more able to evaluate his/her own writing; more motivated to compose and revise; and more interested in proofreading and in the craft of writing (Chisamore, 1980).

FIGURE 3

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF WIDELY USED INFORMAL EVALUATION METHODS*

INFORMAL METHOD	DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
A. Traditional Method	The student submits a paper. The teacher makes a few written, final comments, with a grade and returns the paper to the student. There is no further consideration of the work.	1. Ease and convenience for the teacher. Papers can be graded quickly, outside of class. 2. The teacher can develop a standard set of correction symbols for use on all student work. 3. The teacher can develop a quantified idea of the status of the whole class in writing proficiency.	1. This process emphasizes mechanics of writing and tends to overlook substance. 2. Negative effect on students who receive only red markings and underlinings and little feedback. 3. Students learn that writing consists mostly of mechanics and usage.
B. Mechanics and Form Method (Final Copy Standards Method)	Teachers of writing establish a set of uniform standards for acceptable written work. These are communicated to, or discussed with students. A written work is submitted; it is evaluated against these standards. Teachers, groups of students, or lay readers can check papers. Students must write papers over until standards are met.	1. Standards are fairly developed and clearly communicated to all students. 2. Teachers can be more objective in their evaluation. 3. Students can re-submit papers until they are acceptable. 4. Students develop habits of neatness in written work.	1. This method also emphasizes mechanics, usage and spelling at the expense of more substantial issues. 2. If standards are not reliably used by all graders, the system may provide invalid evaluations.
C. Intellectual Process Method	The teacher bases the evaluation of student writing on the thinking processes embodied in the work. Such as: (1) Focus-what is observed; (2) Contrast-how the observed differs from other things; (3) Classification-the writer notices similarities and uses figures of; (4) Change-the writer observes over time; (5) Physical Context-the writer observes things in their environment;	1. This method supports a process-approach to writing in that it is based on feedback and communication with the student. 2. This approach lends itself to teaching writing in every area of the curriculum. 3. The emphasis on thinking-as-writing will reduce the emphasis on mechanics. 4. Standardized measurement techniques exist which make this form of evaluation fair and objective.	1. The teacher's evaluation of the student's thinking may be highly subjective and can present problems in fairness and consistency. 2. Measures such as these are difficult to do and time consuming. Sampling is necessary and causes validity problems. 3. Some research indicates that syntactic complexity is not a good measure of quality in writing (Potter, 1967).

FIGURE 3 (continued)

INFORMAL METHOD	DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
	(6) Sequence-the writer observes things in time or logical order (Odell, 1977). The teacher may also base the evaluation on the syntactic complexity of the student writing by examining T-units with the assumption that more complex writing is better		
D. All-Staff Grading Method	All teachers at a grade level in a school (or in a department) jointly develop a set of grading standards for student writing. Students submit, for final grades, two writing samples. These are read and graded anonymously by members of the teacher group.	1. This method has been found to produce highly reliable grading with a minimum of training of the teacher-graders. 2. The focus throughout the term is on evaluation since there is only one grading point at the end of the term. 3. Anonymous grading of papers eliminates personal biases of graders. 4. This method facilitates total grade, school or district.	1. There is no specific feedback on student strength and weakness with the final grade. 2. The final grade may be over-emphasized. 3. It may be difficult to get the total staff co-operation this method requires.
E. Computer Analysis Method	Student compositions are entered into the computer as data files. The computer program analyzes the piece by doing word-frequency counts, tabulating variety in sentence length and structure measuring paragraph lengths, etc., and comparing these values with standardized tables of normative values for various age groups.	1. The computer is better at measuring human syntactic complexity than an evaluator. 2. Calculation of such things as word counts are done very quickly. 3. The computer is totally objective.	1. The cost of most available programs (e.g., WORDS, JOURNALISM) is very high. 2. The validity of the programs depends on the assumptions inherent in them. These may be available to teachers. 4. Considerable clerical help is required to input data to computer 5. The analysis may not be relevant to some aspects of evaluation of writing, such as style and elaboration.

*from Direct Measures of Writing Skill: Issues and Applications by Vicki Spandel and Richard J. Stiggins, NUREL, Portland, OR, 1980.

SECTION IV

CONFERENCING: THREE METHODS

• TEACHER • SELF • PEER

Good writing conferences lead writers to become more critical readers of their own work. (Bissex, 1982)

A teacher can serve as a collaborative editor, coach and appreciative audience by providing opportunities for conferencing. Conferencing is a direct, informal approach to evaluating growth and change in students' writing ability. There are three major conferencing methods: **student-teacher conferring, student-self conferring, and student-peer conferring**. Each of the three stresses student involvement. In each, the role of the teacher differs, but, in all three, the teacher's role is "decentered" to allow the student to participate more fully in the writing/thinking process.

All three techniques foster writing by providing communication and feedback during all stages of the writing process. Feedback, whether from the teacher, self or peers, is critical in all forms of communication. If there is something wrong with the "final" student written product, the teacher needs to examine the process. Intervention using any of the three methods at various stages of the writing process is more effective than dealing solely with the "final" product. Teachers benefit from conferencing because it "can reduce the amount of work that the teacher needs to do when teaching writing, and can provide opportunities to students for practice in writing." (Holdzkom, 1984).

Planning a Successful Writing Conference

In a successful writing conference, the student's writing progress is the main topic. The dominant goal is to enable writers to become aware of the basic steps of the writing process and to illustrate to them how they can gain control over it. Conferences require a positive atmosphere in which students feel that their efforts are valued and accepted and that criticism will be fair, constructive, and growth-enhancing. A successful conference requires that teachers have a clear understanding of the writing process. The process approach focuses on the growth of the student-writer as he/she works toward a completed product.

Effective feedback is critical to a writer's development. The conference is one of several forms of feedback which may be provided to the student writer. The teacher's reactions during a conference should be specific, tactful and based on a sound appreciation of the writer's intent.

Also, the conference should help students think and talk about their writing. The focus is on the students' writing behavior. If present, the teacher functions as a friendly interviewer, helping student-writers by posing probing questions such as those that follow:

CONFERENCING THROUGH QUESTIONS

- How did you feel about the assignment?
- Was the topic interesting?
- How did you get started?
- Where did you work?
- What did you write about?
- What would you like to add, delete or change?
- What generally happens when you write?
- How would you evaluate your written work?

SECTION V

CONFERENCING WITH THE TEACHER

The teacher method of conferencing involves the student and teacher at the center of the process. In this method the teacher helps students learn about the writing task by structuring a variety of learning activities.

Teachers can use the individual student/teacher conference; or the student group/teacher conference with their students.

Individual Student/Teacher Conference

The student/teacher conference provides an opportunity for individualized diagnosis of the student's strengths and needs as a writer. The teacher may focus on one or more aspects of the writing, engaging the student in a give-and-take discussion. The conference technique can be used to encourage continued writing by students. By conferencing as often as possible, the teacher demonstrates supportive interest in a student's writing. He/she also provides ongoing diagnosis and feedback with a focus on growth and improvement in language development and the writing process.

The following three techniques - role playing, error analysis, tape recorder commentary - are suggested for teachers to use or adapt accordingly in their conferences with students on an individual basis.

- **Role-Playing** - This is a motivational approach through which the teacher attempts to "connect real-life and writing situations." (Josten, 1979). It can help students see the link between learning to write in school and using that skill in real-life situations.

  In this approach, the teacher may begin a discussion with the student on a real-life problem. As the teacher unfolds the problem situation, the student can respond and become involved with the matter. The student is then presented with a writing task directly related to the problem. If the student identifies with the situation, then the student will give his/her own reasons as to why he/she is writing. When this occurs, the writing will be more student-centered and less teacher-centered because the student will recognize why he/she is writing. That is, the students will have established his/her purpose for writing. (See Understanding the Writing Process: Introducing Students to Composing, Braungart-Bloom, 1985.)

A Simulated Role Playing Situation

Scene: A conference room or classroom with a seventh grade student.

Teacher: "Did you see the story in last evening's newspaper about a serious issue -- pollution?"

Student: "What happened?"

Teacher: "The article was about an older person who lived alone and whose only companion was her dog. Because of chemical sprays used by the township, which the dog ingested..."

Student: "Ingested? What's that?!"

Teacher: "The dog sniffed, and may have eaten grass contaminated with bug spray used by the township."

Student: "Then what happened?"

Teacher: "The dog became ill and died. The lady was left alone and was very unhappy. She decided to write to the township but nothing happened."

Student: "That's not right. When I hear of stories about sick animals and lonely people, I get very upset. Maybe I can do something as a concerned person."

Teacher: "Like what?"

Student: "Well, I can write to my congressman, and I can write to the lady,"

At this point, the student has become involved with the problem. The teacher then has an opportunity to go on and say, "**Okay, write the letter that is needed.**" The role playing stimulates the process of writing and revising.

This technique also works successfully if the student is asked to write a letter as if he/she were the responding congressman, or the polluter in question or the home-owner who lives next door to the lady, etc.

- **Error Analysis** - The teacher can help the student by identifying strengths and needs. When focusing on error analysis, the evaluator whether using standardized or published instruments or personally reviewing written work, should recognize that at times student errors result when the student efforts to communicate are sincere.

Errors can offer clues to the linguistic thought processes which produced them and to the teaching opportunities that can be provided to remediate them. The error analyst looks for several possible causes for the error, and devises strategies for overcoming the difficulty (Duke, 1979). Teachers must help students see the variety of possible routes they may have taken to the error. The product approach treats errors as "bad," as evidence of student failure to learn correct forms of need for intensive drill. The process approach, in contrast, treats errors in student writing as "good", in that they provide the teacher with useful insights into the student's language and thinking systems (Shaughnessy, 1977). The process approach views error-making as a useful, diagnostic tool for teaching.

Error-analysis can be used to improve the student writer's organization, logical thinking, and syntactic maturity (Sipple, 1978). Teachers may wish to use a checklist to facilitate analysis. Since inconsistent analyses can be frustrating for students and teachers alike, a standard evaluation form such as the Sager or Diederich Scales can be valuable. (See Appendix A Assessment and Evaluation). Such scales or modification of them make analysis reliable and increase the teacher's responsibility during the conference by asking the teacher to:

1) define the meaning of the terms on the scale;

2) define standards or ratings from "effective" to "less effective" for each merit or characteristic;

3) evaluate the paper thoroughly;

4) state the evaluation criteria;

5) permit the student to revise the paper in response to concrete suggestions;

6) judge the revision by the same criteria or standards as the original;

7) give tangible and understandable rewards for revision;

8) rank the importance of the items on the scale;

9) correlate teaching emphasis with evaluation criteria;

10) teach aspects of style. (Millet, 1969.)

Such scales, when adapted to individual teaching situations, clarify the composing process for both teachers and students by contributing to an atmosphere which fosters better cooperation and understanding.

- **Tape Recorder Commentary** - Giving feedback to the student may be simplified by using a tape recorder. Several studies comment on the success of this method for students at all levels of language proficiency (Medlicott, 1979; Hays, 1978). A few days before the student/teacher conference, a student turns in an essay to the teacher for evaluation and/or diagnosis. The teacher carefully comments on the essay via cassette tape and returns the paper and the cassette "feedback" to the student. The student reviews the feedback before the conference with the teacher, thus allowing for more constructive use of time for all parties. This method involves "less time for more comment." According to research findings, students mention their appreciation of the personalized taped message using the cassette approach (Hays, 1978). As in all the approaches presented, the teacher decides who will benefit the most from this technique.

  The cassette provides the student with an experience that is almost like a personal meeting with the instructor, with the added advantage that the tape can be played as frequently as the student chooses. One suggested technique is for the teacher to leave the tape recorder on while trying to provide a correction to an awkward sentence, thereby allowing the student to hear the teacher trying various ways of correction before deciding on the most satisfactory response. This approach gives students a chance to hear how writing is generated and to gain some "courage" from hearing the teacher struggle to write (Hays, 1978). As additional follow-up, at the next class meeting or individual conference, teacher and student can listen to the tape and discuss the composition together.

Student Group/Teacher Conference

In addition to the individualized teacher-student conferences, the teacher may wish to provide feedback to the entire class after a sustained period of writing and revising. This total group activity may involve a "read-around" in which students read from their work to the group, and answer focus or extension questions from other students as a means of getting feedback and evaluation of their work. The teacher's response to such sharing should be guided by some basic principles of successful interpersonal communication (Hagaman, 1980).
Teacher feedback should:

- convey positive regard for the writer and the written message. The feedback should capitalize on the strengths of the work and tactfully refer to some areas of potential improvement;

- show empathic understanding of the writer's intent, thoughts and feelings;

- openly acknowledge the teacher's own feelings. This should be done tactfully and authentically so that both teacher and student achieve a sense of satisfaction from the exchange; and

- actively involve the student in the interchange and provide ample opportunity for constructive dialogue.

SECTION VI

CONFERENCING WITHOUT THE TEACHER

I know my students should be writing more, but I just don't have the time to evaluate their work. (Anonymous Teacher)

This statement is repeated all too often by educators concerned with the quality of their students' writing, yet hesitant about changing classroom practice. Many teachers tend not to give assignments which require a lot of writing. When they do, more often than not these papers are placed at the bottom of the "to be corrected" pile. What is needed, then, is a way to reduce the time teachers spend on evaluation while simultaneously making the evaluation process more valuable for students and teachers.

One way to achieve this is through increased student involvement. According to Madeline Hunter (1980), learning will not occur unless there is interaction between the learner and the task, each having a direct effect on the other. In other words, students must become actively involved in evaluating their own writing if they are to progress along the continuum of writing development. It is not always necessary for teachers to correct students' writing. Instead, students should be helped to assume the responsibility for analyzing their own compositions and diagnosing their own writing problems. Students can be taught questions to ask themselves or others when monitoring their work for revision or editing, this will aid their growth as independent writers. (Some model questions are provided in Appendix.) There are two ways to have students engage in conferencing without teachers.

The **self method** engages students in the responsibility of evaluating their own writing throughout the entire process of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and post-writing. This method does not require a lot of teacher or in-class time, and it develops editing skills within the process of writing. In addition, self-evaluation allows for student autonomy and decision-making which leads to greater self-confidence and independence.

The **peer method** requires that small working groups be established for the purpose of responding to each other's efforts. Student groups are particularly useful because they provide the writer with a varied audience. Depending upon the objective of the teacher, grouping can be done in many ways - natural selection, interest or special ability. Because this approach involves student interaction and requires open lines of communication, interpersonal skills must be developed so that an easy, cooperative give-and-take can occur. Teachers must be prepared to help this develop.

These methods can assist students in gaining better control over their approach to writing during the actual process. While neither method replaces the instructor's actual final comments and evaluation, they do provide appraisals throughout the writing process. The teacher serves as a resource person or facilitator, establishing a climate of trust (Beaven, 1977). Students, in turn, increase their involvement in decision-making and judging, while performing critical author-centered tasks, such as thoughtful planning, careful reading, writing, revising and editing. As students become involved in these tasks, teacher involvement is decentered and teacher time is more efficiently spent in moving students toward the goal of becoming both audience and critic of their own writing.

It should be noted that although these methods differ in rationale, teaching strategies can be common to both. The following discussion of each of these methods provides an expanded description and specific techniques or strategies which teachers may wish to use.

The Self Method

Three approaches can be used in the self method. Each of these techniques will help develop the students/writers decision-making capabilities. They are: (1) self-questioning techniques; (2) reading aloud to self; and (3) tape recording self.

- **The Self-Questioning Technique** In the self-questioning technique the teacher's role is that of a coach or facilitator who poses questions during the prewriting stage. For example, students should know the answers to the following three questions before they begin to write.

  1) Why am I writing?

     - Am I writing to express, to share experiences, to communicate socially? (Expressive)

     - Am I writing to record, report, generalize, theorize, regulate, or persuade? (Transactional)

     - Am I writing to communicate in and through the total verbal construct? (Poetic)

  2) To whom am I writing?

  3) What outcome do I expect to achieve? In other words, how do I expect the written message to affect my intended audience?

  During the actual writing exercise, students can be taught to react to various aspects of their work. The following questions are suggested as a foundation for all self-evaluation techniques (Beaven, 1977). The teacher may provide a list of questions such as the following:

1) How much time did I spend on this paper?

2) (After the first evaluation) What did I try to improve or experiment with on this paper? How successful was I? If I had questions about what I was trying to do, what were they?

3) What are the strengths of my paper? (Place a wavy line beside those passages I feel are very good.)

4) What are the needs, if any, of my paper? (Place an X beside passages I would like my teacher to correct or revise. Place an X over any punctuation, spelling, usage, etc., where I need help or clarification.)

5) What one thing will I do to improve my next piece of writing? Or, what kind of experimentation in writing would I like to try? If I would like some information related to what I want to do, write down my questions.

As students analyze their responses to such questions, they begin to realize that writing is a time-consuming, cyclical process requiring many drafts. Students also conclude from this questioning process that it is acceptable to have problems in revision, structure, and reconceptualizing ideas for structure. Finally, the use of this guideline allows students additional opportunities to establish goals, thus increasing his/her independence and self-reliance. It is important that the teacher encourage and respect this form of student evaluation, thereby helping to promote a climate of trust.

When using a self-questioning technique, it is suggested that the teacher keep the following guidelines in mind (Chambers, 1981):

- Allow sufficient time to pass between student writing and student self-assessment.
- Provide a limited checklist of items to be considered.
- Make checklist items as specific as possible.
- Involve the student in developing the checklist.

Instruction in writing, as in most subjects, must account for individual differences. Some students may begin to feel frustrated when repeatedly asked about why they did something in a specific way when their background and writing experiences may not be sufficient to provide the answers. Other students may find success in a more structured environment.

- **Reading Aloud to Oneself** When students read what they have written aloud, often they can find their mistakes in grammar, punctuation, content and organization. An audience may not always be available. And, students need to realize that the "self", too, is an audience. In addition to increasing the students' independence, reading aloud utilizes the skills of purposeful listening. Students must listen

to what they are reading to see if their written words actually convey the thoughts they intended. In other words, students must read with their ears as well as their eyes. They should be cautioned against unconsciously correcting what they have read without recording those corrections within the text.

- **Tape Recording Self** Students sometimes read what they think they have written rather than what they have actually written. To correct this, students should be encouraged to read into a tape recorder, and then with their composition close in hand, play the tape. This writing, reading and listening connection furthers language development and enhances student communication skills.

The Peer Method

The peer method engages students in the process of writing through participatory roles that require successful interaction among students (Payan, 1984). Underlying the success of this method is the educational value of group work. Teachers must realize, however, that group process takes time and may require training in interpersonal skills. Some teachers may not have confidence in the group process because they feel that students may overlook errors, misunderstand selections, or not have skills in objectivity and constructive criticism. These are valid concerns, but the benefits of the peer evaluation approach can be substantial.

Beaven (1977) notes that research studies dealing with peer groups and evaluation generally indicate "improvement in theme-writing ability and usage when small groups of students engage in peer evaluation...(such groups) may equal or even exceed the improvement that occurs under evaluation procedures carried out by the teacher."

- **Elements of Successful Interactions Among Students** - In the group evaluation process, students may serve in the roles of reader, writer, and/or editor. To ensure success the teacher must foster peer instruction. (See Appendix C for suggested techniques.) Students who read each other's writing may provide support in the reader's role. This can be achieved by identifying the writer's theme or intended meaning. Students may also make suggestions in the writer's role. For example, they may provide or elaborate upon projecting, elaborating words, sentences and ideas in the piece. Students may also offer editorial revisions acting in the editor's role observing usage, capitalization and punctuation.

Once the writing groups are established, the following suggestions can be given to the group with adjustments for their grade level (Chambers, 1981).

1) Listen carefully to the student reading the sample. You can't respond if you haven't really heard.

2) Start with a positive reaction. Tell why you like it and what's particularly good. Later, you can talk about small points like word choices and phrasing.

3) Discuss, don't argue. Remember, your job is to suggest.

4) Don't talk too much - but don't talk too little. Say what you really feel, but concentrate on your strongest feelings.

5) Be serious in trying to help. Remember, you're a writer too and need good opinions yourself. Be specific, avoid generalizations like: "nice," "good," "interesting."

6) Consult a writing checklist to remind you of specific items worth discussing. (The teacher may direct the students to focus on only one or two aspects on the checklist after audience and purpose have been defined. For the less experienced writer, the teacher may need to state both the audience and purpose so the other features of the prewriting process are clearly defined--e.g. determining the content and developing an organizational plan.)

The writing instruction experts who use the peer evaluation method (Murray, Elbow, McCrory) insist that the teacher give the initial direction and that the feedback session center on the following:

> **What were the writer's goals? Were they reached? If not, identify those passages that need improvement and as a group revise those sections, writing final versions on the back of the paper.**

As in the self-evaluation method, questions for peer evaluation need to be varied, depending upon the teaching objective.

There are several advantages to this approach, both for the teacher and student. The burden of "paper overload" is reduced. The teacher, when he/she finally does receive the written work, should find a drastic reduction in the amount of errors and time for individualized monitoring of students' progress. The students' viewpoint and input in the proofreading and editing stages allows them to participate actively in the writing process. Furthermore, students have more opportunity to write and receive immediate feedback from a source less threatening than the teacher.

SECTION VII

STRATEGIES FOR THE SELF AND PEER METHODS

The evaluative strategies in this section are designed to increase student involvement throughout the writing process. Instead of waiting for a paper to be returned with a "final grade," these techniques provide immediate feedback to the student writers while they are involved in the writing process. These strategies include checklists, peer conferencing, coding, oral reading, publishing and displaying. What is unique about them is that they allow students to become both audience and critic of their own writing.

CHECKLISTS

A checklist provides an organized framework for offering feedback that enables students to focus their attention on specific skills. Although ratings or grades are not components of this strategy, student strengths and needs can certainly be revealed.

Depending on the teacher's objectives, the checklist should be relevant to concepts which have been taught. The checklist can be constructed and revised by the class during the course of a year, thus making it more meaningful for the students. Teachers may also circle the error(s) on the paper and allow the students the opportunity "to learn" by identifying their own error(s) within the organized framework of the checklist.

The teaching of grammar should not occur in isolation, but rather within the process of learning the composing process. Checklists could reflect such skill areas as sentence structure, organization of ideas, and editing during the process of writing.

Of course, the complexity or sophistication of the checklist should be contingent upon the grade level. Several examples can be found in Appendix B - Checklists/Checkpoints.

PEER CONFERENCING

There are several variations to this technique, but basic to it are the following steps:

1) Classes are divided into small groups.

2) A topic is assigned and students are given time to think and discuss what they want to say. Brainstorming is a successful technique for this time, and the strategy has application in all content areas, especially in history or science. Brainstorming allows students to freely associate ideas, group and organize ideas, and plan for composing the first draft. Teachers who use this technique with their students can encourage them to apply the same technique with group of peers or alone.

3) Students compose first draft and assess their own papers before proceeding to the next step.

4) Peer evaluation occurs. Certain skills are looked for, depending on what the teacher wants to emphasize, however determination of the author's audience and purpose should be requisites. Peer reaction may be oral or written. The teacher-student "personalized" devised checklist could offer additional focus.

5) The author reacts either orally or in writing, and is free to accept or not accept constructive suggestions.

6) Further revisions and peer evaluations should occur at this time.

7) Final draft is prepared.

When students get together to help each other edit their writing at Step #4, they need some rules-of-thumb or questions to help them know what to look for as they evaluate. They should also come to learn how to evaluate their own work independently by learning the questions to ask themselves about their written text. The teacher, as the facilitator, needs to give direction to all phases.

The method of grouping is of importance. Chisamore (1980) suggests that groups be heterogeneous because "...poorer writers can furnish insights about those parts of the writing which are not clear as well as better writers." For some students, oral reading of the writing sample assists them in this method since "written language is comprehended in much the same way as oral language." (Goodman, 1979.)

The teacher has several options when establishing the peer conference process. Descriptions of several variations of peer conferencing follows:

VARIATION I: Editorial Groups

In her article entitled "Editorial Groups," Audrey Roth (1979), suggests assigning a role to each member: author, editor, and proofreader. All students receive a guide sheet for each of the three roles. (See Appendix B - Checklists/Checkpoints.) By rotating turns each student can eventually function in each of the three roles.

VARIATION II: Designated Editor

This procedure (Chambers, 1981) is based on the assumption that students vary in abilities and strengths. In every class, there will be students who excel in puncutation, spelling, organization, etc. They are identified as "first chair" editors in their specialty. However, every student can be asked to be an editor and it is advisable that each know how to be a useful editor to their peers. In serving as editors for their peers, students can better understand how to make the conventions of writing work for themselves both as authors and as self-editors.

VARIATION III: Timed Commentary

Hawley, in her 1979 article on peer evaluation, describes a technique in which each student prepares a half sheet commentary for each of the other students. Compositions can be either read aloud or passed around. The teacher acts as a time-keeper, making sure that all papers get equal time. After the last round, students give written feedback to the author with their names on them. If the author needs clarification or further discussion on an issue, he/she knows who to seek out. The underlying rule of this technique is that the feedback sheets should focus on the positives, not on omissions.

VARIATION IV: Summary-Observation

Another variation is suggested by Foster and Naranjo (1977). Five students are directed to summarize independently a peer's essay in one to three sentences. Next they are requested to write an observation about it. This observation could focus the author's purpose, audience, organization of ideas, etc. Finally comment sheets are individually submitted to the author, thereby increasing the objectivity.

VARIATION V: Focused Feedback Sheets

Similar to the designated editor, this strategy uses a prepared Peer Editor's Feedback Sheet. The form directs the peer editor to examine three elements:

1. Structure of the paragraph - including a central topic in the first sentence and a concluding sentence;

2. Content or main body of the paragraph - including relevant details; vivid imagery and details; and,

3. Words and order in the sentence of the paragraph - including sentence fragments, run-on sentences, punctation errors and spelling.

The Peer Editor Sheets may be submitted individually to the student author.

VARIATION VI: Rotating Tasks

The class is divided into groups of four, with each member receiving a piece of paper with a number from one to four on it. Each member is job is defined by his number. The jobs for each member are described below.

Task 1: Read your own composition. (Purpose: Reading aloud helps students "see" their own composition and assists in proofreading.)

Task 2: Verbally relate or retell the composition. (Purpose: Lets the writer know if ideas are understood.)

Task 3: Tell what you liked about the composition. (Purpose: Lets the writer know which part of about the composition his/her writing is particularly successful.)

Task 4: Tell what needs clarification or expansion. (Purpose: Helps the writer find areas of weakness.)

The numbered paper is then handed to the person on the right and the process is repeated with each person in a new role. (Adapted from STAR, 1981.)

PAIRING

As an intermediate step between self-evaluation and working in peer groups, teachers may find it helpful to pair students for the editing stage. As with the peer conferencing technique, pairs may be combined in many ways.

VARIATION I: Vertical Sharing

Chambers (1981) offers two techniques, "vertical sharing" and "pencil pal." The first, "vertical sharing," pairs older students with younger students: e.g., fourth graders and second graders. For an allotted period of time each week, the pairs meet and share their work. Depending upon the teacher's objective, the younger students can also dictate their stories to the older ones, who then take on the role of a "recorder." In addition, the younger students get to read what they authored. Conversely, the younger students can become an "audience" for the older author.

VARIATION II: Pencil Pal

The second technique, "pencil pal", is designed to increase students' motivation as well as improve editing skills. "Pencil Pal" is possible at or across grades within a school, as well as across schools within or outside the school district.

Two students of similar ability write to each other once a week at least. The receiver of the letter responds in writing as a student editor using a standard checklist, having devised personal criteria with the author. Once the response is received, the original author may make the necessary revisions, keeping his/her partner's suggestions in mind.

VARIATION III: Questions - Solutions

The following sample questions signal student-writers what to look for when evaluating their writing Possible solutions, based on text, are also provided to the students. Questions should be adapted to grade level, mode, topic, and skills to be taught. When using this approach it is important that one child read aloud to the others. The students focus on one question at a time and together generate solutions. This method will require three readings of a text to identify any problems.

	Questions	Solutions (generated by students)
1.	Does that sentence sound like speech?	Change the word ending, punctuation, or word order.
2.	Does that look like printed language?	Change the spelling, punctuation, or print.
3.	Does that make sense?	Rethink what you meant and write a new sentence for the one not making sense.
		Cross out the sentence.
		Put the sentence in another position.
		Add more sentences to clarify the sentence not making sense.

CODING

A code which use numbers or symbols to correspond to mechanical or content suggestions can be used as a conferencing tool. It may prove more effective and meaningful for the teacher and students to devise the system together, adding to the list as additional skills are addressed in class. The code can be posted in the classroom as a common reference, and copies are shared with each student. This technique saves time for teachers and students. Notations can be clearly understood by students and less time is needed for clarification. Students become less discouraged and feel better about themselves if they don't see a lot of "red"! A description of three variations of this technique follows.

VARIATION I: "Evaluation - Solution Cards"

Student receives "Evaluation Cards" with positive or negative judgments about the effect of a sentence or a series of sentences within a draft. The evaluation cards are numbered consecutively. The student assigns an evaluation card number to each sentence in the composition and writes it in the left margin of the draft. Solutions for the negative evaluations must be found in "Solution Cards" which are letter coded. The letter for the solution is then written beside the evaluation numbers. Both are circled when the student figures out a satisfactory revision of a sentence, deletes it, or puts it in a different position. Teacher editing could also be based on the same procedure followed by discussion of the reasons underlying either the evaluations or suggested solutions:

EVALUATION CARDS (strips or 3 x 5" cards)

1. People won't see why this is important.
2. People may not believe this.
3. People may not understand what I mean here.
4. This sentence is well stated.
5. This is a useful sentence.
6. I am confused about what I am trying to say.

SOLUTION CARDS (strips or 3 x 5" cards)

A. I think I'll leave it this way.

B. I'd better give an example or definition here.

C. I'd better say more.

D. I'd better reword it to refer clearly to the major topic.

It is possible to adjust the difficulty of the revision procedure by initially having students work only with a small subset of evaluation and solution cards. As students progress, add new cards. This technique can also be individualized according to their mode of discourse.

VARIATION II: Text Keys

Rocchio (1974) offers a list of 28 problem areas. (See Appendix D.) Because punctuation is a cumbersome area, he suggests that this number be circled and accompanied by a letter. The number would indicate a chapter in the student's text and the letter would correspond to a designated concept. For example, 12b would point out an error in punctuation and guide the student to refer to Chapter 12, item b in the text. As an alternative, McLeod (1967) suggests that a list of symbols be keyed to page numbers in the text. Those skill areas which can't be keyed, such as those concerned with thought and organization, would require a brief explanation written on the composition. The student then makes the necessary corrections on a separate sheet which would be returned to the evaluator with the original copy. There is no need for the student to keep rewriting the entire draft until it is time for the final copy. McLeod points out that no system is guaranteed to eliminate errors in student work. Students might make the necessary corrections, but then make further mistakes.

VARIATION III: Schoolwide Proofreading Code

A school and/or district proofreading code can be developed to help students make a smoother transition from grade-to-grade. Consistent use of the symbols throughout the grades would allow students to internalize

the code and in addition, help establish a common editing framework within the school system. The universal system found in most dictionaries could serve as a standard reference but, teachers need to select those symbols which are appropriate for their grades.

ORAL READING

Oral reading is a technique that can be used in self and peer evaluation. When work is read aloud, mistakes in punctuation and needs in organization, content, sentence structure and focus can become more evident. Students may read their writing aloud several times, each time for a different reason. This technique of purposeful listening can be focused even further by using a checklist.

Frequently, students tend to read what they "think" they have written. To help avoid this, try having students switch papers and read each other's words aloud. Students can also read what they have written into a tape recorder and play it back, checking to see that what they have read is, in fact, what they have written.

PUBLISHING AND DISPLAYING

Students enjoy reading each other's work. To encourage this in the classroom, teachers can consider publishing or, in some way, displaying the student's work. Writing corners, bulletin board displays, and a "readers wanted" station, where original compositions are posted by the authors who are proud of their compositions, are a few alternatives. (See Staff Development Guide and Reference Handbook pages 106-107 for a list of "25 Publishers That Welcome Students' Writing;" Braungart-Bloom, NJSDE, 1983.)

COMPUTERS

Another approach to having students evaluate their writing is through the use of computers. Word processors can spark students interest in the writing process, and serve teaching device. With the flick of a key, students, can make the necessary revisions. Because errors are easier to correct, students are able to focus initially on content, without immediately being concerned with punctuation, spelling, etc. Later, they can go back and edit, concentrating on organization and grammar (Choate, 1982).

There are presently several word processing programs on the market. When selecting a program consider its complexity and choose one that is easy to use and appropriate for the grade. This is a rapidly changing field and constant updating on the part of the user is advised.

Bradley (1982) and Wooley (1984) recommend the following in word processors for elementary school instruction:

1. A screen editor is vital so that children can see their entire work (or a good portion of it) at one time.

2. The screen should display upper and lower case letters.

3. The text should be displayed in a double spaced format.

4. The capability for displaying large, primary type letters or normal sized ones by giving a command would be an asset.

5. Left or right arrow deletion and retrieval functions were well accepted by students in her study.

6. Mnemonic commands that relate to younger children's vocabularies would be easier for them to learn and remember. For instance for some children, CTRL "E" for erase would be much easier than CTRL "D" for delete which is not a familiar word to most children. [However, if the word processor purchased has these commands, then children should be expected to learn the terms.]

7. The smallest number of commands possible should be used.

8. A quiet printer is very important to avoid disturbing others in the classroom.

SECTION VIII

CONCLUSION

These conferencing methods and suggested strategies and techniques are designed to increase student involvement in the writing process. Instead of waiting for a paper to be returned with that "final grade," teachers need to provide feedback to student-writers when they are planning, drafting, revising, and editing. With these methods students can become both audience and critics of their own work.

As one teacher so aptly stated, "When students recognize their mistakes and say 'I can do it better' or 'I can do it differently,' assessment and evaluation have taken a natural place in the writing process as tools for promoting writing proficiency."

APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

- Selecting An Assessment Method
- Sager Writing Scale
- Diederich Model

SELECTING AN ASSESSMENT METHOD

When considering the evaluation of students' writing performance, educators need to address two elements: 1) how the writing performance will be assessed, and 2) how the results will be shared with the student, parents/guardians, and in some cases, district and community. Below are a series of questions a teacher or supervisor needs to consider before selecting a method for evaluating students' writing performance (Holdzkom, Reed, Porter, and Rubin, 1982):

1. What method of evaluation matches the goals I have set for my educational program?

2. What do I want to know about the progress my students have made?

3. Which method of evaluation will tell me whether my instructional program has been effective?

4. Do I want to know only what has been learned during a given period, or do I want an evaluation method that will give me information about how to adjust instruction to best meet the needs of the students?

5. How do I want to communicate with my students and their parents about the progress the students are making and about the instructional program?

6. What can I do effectively, given the limitations on my time? What adjustments will I have to make if I adopt a particular method?

7. What do I <u>have</u> to do; that is, what are the constraints placed on me by forces outside the classroom? Given those demands, what alternatives and choices do I have?

AIR, ACCURATE, EFFICIENT GRADING?

Possibly A Writing Scale

Writing scales, as the insert shows, can be made to reflect any skill clusters or qualities of writing considered important. Generally, the scales include a high to low range and they force the reader's attention on specific areas of concern.

Standard scales, like that used in the Diederich Plan, can be used, or scales can be developed locally. In fact, an individual teacher may want to develop a scale based on specific classroom goals or needs.

If a decision is made to create a scale, topics to be rated should be carefully considered. Likewise, much attention should be given to the designation of descriptive characteristics in which each rating is based (see Sager scale.)

Before a scale is widely used, it should first be tested on sample writings.

Things to keep in mind are the appropriateness of the topic and the specificity of the scale. The descriptive characteristics should be specific enough to simplify the rating process. You should make revisions as needed.

Although scales are often used to rank students, the ratings may also be correlated to a grade.

SAGER WRITING SCALE

Rating	Vocabulary	Organization	Elaborate	Structure
High 3	New, interesting words create vivid impressions Exact words Unusual expressions, word combinations and comparisons	Ideas easy to follow Events in logical order Main idea ties all together Beginning interesting Action builds Conclusion sums up Relevant details	Variety of related ideas Details create pictures Details make reader feel Details create impressions Ideas fully developed Ideas follow easily	Variety of sentences Ideas stated accurately and fluently Complete sentences Can be read aloud with ease
2	Words adequately descriptive Some words exact Some new, interesting words Some variety of word choice Some vivid words and comparisons	Main idea--but not well arranged Some events out or order Main idea ties together Good beginning-good ending--but may ramble Relevant details	Ideas clear but create little impression Ideas orderly but lack punch Some details stimulate senses Some ideas fully developed Some ideas inadequate or overdone	Ideas accurate but not always fluent Most sentences complete Some variety of sentences may sound stiff or uneven in parts
1	A few interesting words--little variety of choice Uses general words more often than exact words Few descriptive words or phrases	Main idea--but many irrelevant events Main events out of order Weak beginning and/or ending	More detail is needed Ideas hard to follow Important questions left ur answered	Ideas sometime hard to follow Some complete sentences Run-ons and fragments Little sentence variety Primer style Hard to read aloud
Low 0	Common overworked words Little variety	Jumbled arrangements of ideas Main idea unclear Beginning, middle, end unclear	Ideas not clear No details Ideas jumbled and/or uncorrected	Meaning unclear Few complete sentences Omissions and fragments No sentence variety Story confused--senseless when read aloud

Source: Educational Improvement Center - South

RATING AN ENTIRE SCHOOL?

Perhaps the Diederich Model

Although the Diederich Plan for ranking large numbers of students takes a year to complete, the effort may be well worthwhile.

Using this approach, students write four compositions on pre-determined topics during the year. These compositions are then number coded to ensure grading impartiality. Raters who've practiced using the Diederich Scale read and rate the papers.

For the ratings to be statistically valid, all papers must be read and rated by two evaluators. The combination of both ratings results in the score.

Although one sample writing may give some limited insight into a student's writing ability, no conclusions can be drawn until all four papers have been written and evaluated.

At the end of the year, scores from each student's paper are totaled. Total scores for each student will range between 40 and 200.

These scores are then entered in an alphabetical listing of the student body.

The school has been ranked; and this rank ordering can be put to, at least, the following uses:

- to identify the weakest and strongest writers in the school
- to see where students rank in relation to each other
- to provide counseling information for course selection
- to indicate a student's growth from year to year, and
- to offer insight into program effectiveness.

Importantly, using the Diederich Plan means that evaluation is based on several writing samples, spans ten months of instruction, and reflects objective ratings by more than one evaluation.

DIEDERICH SCALE

	Low		Middle		High
General Merit					
Ideas	2	4	6	8	10
Organization	2	4	6	8	10
Wording	1	2	3	4	5
Flavor	1	2	3	4	5
Mechanics					
Usage	1	2	3	4	5
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Handwriting	1	2	3	4	5

Rater _____ Total ____

Student Identification Slip

Six Digit Number. . . . . Topic Number: 1 2 3 4 (circle one)

Name. . . . . Total Score. . . . . .

Teacher's Name. . . . . .

USING THE DIEDERICH SCALE

Before students begin the essay:

- Students fill out a short I.D. slip
- Six digit number from I.D. slip is used on student essay instead of name
- I.D. slips collected

The rating process:

- Raters rate quickly, using the Scale
- Each paper given two ratings
- Papers collected and collated - (one paper, one student I.D., two Raters' Scales)
- Scores are combined and entered on student I.D. slip
- Scores entered on alphabetical listing of student body

APPENDIX B: CHECKLISTS/CHECKPOINTS

- Writing Skills Checklists
- A Framework for Developing Writing Checklists
- Student Checklist for Better Themes
- Checkpoints for Writing
- Proofreading Checklist
- A Checklist for Editorial Groups
- Self-Method Reflection Checkpoints
- Self-Check

• Checklists/Checkpoints

WRITING SKILLS CHECKLISTS

In the area of writing, degree of mastery is highly individualized and students will exhibit a wide range of performance and skill. Checklists can help the student and instructor track his/her progress and performance in specific areas.

Following are suggested uses for the checklists from "Project W.R.I.T.E.", 1982.

1. Each student can be assigned an individual checklist to be kept in a writing folder which is passed from grade-to-grade.

2. Samples of students' writing at each stage of the writing process can be taken by the teacher at least three times a year for the purpose of checklist evaluation. These writing samples can be kept in each student's writing folder.

3. Writing samples on the checklist evaluation can be shared with student and parents during conferences.

4. Writing samples can be taken from content areas other than English and/or communication to monitor student writing across subject areas.

• Checklists/Checkpoints

A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING WRITING CHECKLISTS*

I. Organization and Development Skills

A. Definitions

1. Organization is a sequence of written expressions planned to achieve specific results.

a. Identification, as determined by the purpose and audience for the writing;

b. Selection of sequence.

2. Development is the sufficient and appropriate use of details, reasons, examples, facts, anecdotes to produce the intended effect.

B. Skills of Organization and Development

1. Relating events in the order of occurrence

2. Arranging steps of a process in a logical order

3. Stating a topic sentence and giving supporting details

4. Explaining how and why something happened

5. Defining in context

6. Classifying

7. Generalizing and particularizing

8. Comparing and contrasting

9. Bringing ideas together for coherence

10. Choosing appropriate* mode, format and genre

11. Beginning and concluding appropriately*

12. Choosing appropriate* diction

13. Anticipating possible misunderstandings in order to achieve clarity

14. Editing and revising

15. Proofreading

*Appropriateness as determined by the purpose of, and the audience for, the writing.

• Checklists/Checkpoints

II. Language Skills

A. Spelling

1. Common, non-academic, useful words
2. Specialized vocabulary of subject areas

B. Capitalization

1. Initial word in sentence
2. Direct quotation
3. Letter form
4. Proper nouns and adjectives
5. Titles

C. Punctuation

1. End
2. Possessive
3. Contraction
4. Direct Address
5. Series
6. Direct Quote
7. Addresses
8. Dates
9. Abbreviations

D. Grammar and Usage

1. Verb form - egregious errors
2. Tense - consistency, accuracy
3. Pronoun reference - clarity only

4. Subject-verb agreement - simple

5. Double negative

6. Items impeding clarity

E. Other

1. Narrative/expressive mode

2. Expository/transactional mode

3. Poetic Mode

III. Handwriting Skills: Writing or printing legibly

Helping Student Writers Grades 7-12, 1980

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR BETTER THEMES*

NAME _____ DATE _____

TITLE OF THEME _____

Procedures:
1. Examine your theme for each of the following characteristics.
2. Revise it until you feel you cannot improve it further.
3. Initial each statement which you feel describes your work.
4. If you cannot honestly initial a statement, explain why below.
5. Clip this check list to your paper when you turn it in.

_____ My theme has a definite purpose or point.

_____ My title indicates what this point is.

_____ I had certain readers in mind as I wrote.

_____ I arranged ideas in the best order to help the readers understand.

_____ Every fact or detail I gave relates to the point I was trying to make.

_____ Each paragraph contains a clear topic sentence or idea.

_____ I composed my opening sentence to catch the attention of the reader.

_____ In my last sentence I emphasized my purpose or point.

_____ I checked each sentence to see that the subject and predicate agreed.

_____ I provided an unmistakable antecedent for each pronoun.

_____ I began each sentence with a capital letter and ended it with a suitable mark of punctuation.

_____ I can explain why I placed every punctuation mark where I did.

_____ I have read my composition aloud to catch unintentional repetitions and omissions.

*Chambers, "Evaluating Student Writing."

• **Checklists/Checkpoints**

CHECKPOINTS FOR WRITING*

1. What part is most interesting? Why?

2. Is any part confusing? Which one?

3. Do ideas or events follow each other in an order that make sense? (Are they logical)?

4. Is there enough detail? If not, where should the writer add detail?

5. Do you feel this paper needs some illustrations or examples to back up a statement or an opinion? Where?

6. Should any sentence be omitted?

7. Is the opening interesting? Is there a better way to begin?

8. Is the ending interesting? Is there a better way to end?

*STAR, 1981

• **Checklists/Checkpoints**

PROOFREADING CHECKLIST*

Procedures:

- Have students exchange papers within a group.
- Target specific skills. Tell the students exactly what to look for. Make sure they all know the rules. Don't hold them responsible for things that are not targeted.
- To check spelling the proofreader can start at the bottom right corner and work his/her way backwards to the top.

Yes/No

__ __ 1. Has anything important to the meaning been left out? A word? or a phrase?

__ __ 2. Is there unnecessary repetition?

__ __ 3. Does it make sense to you? (logical? punctuation where needed?)

__ __ 4. Is the spelling and sentence structure as clear as you think it could be?

__ __ 5. Can you think of any way the author can make his/her point more clearly? If so, please explain.

*STAR, 1981

• Checklists/Checkpoints

A CHECKLIST FOR EDITORIAL GROUPS*

Yes/No **Author**

__ __ 1. Is the topic sufficiently narrow?

__ __ 2. Can something worthwhile be said about it in the time available for essay preparation and in a reasonable amount of writing space?

__ __ 3. Do you have enough information about the topic to begin writing about it?

__ __ 4. Do you have something you really want to communicate?

__ __ 5. Are you writing in order to fulfill an assignment or cover a piece of paper?

__ __ 6. What is your purpose in writing this piece?

__ __ 7. How do you expect to affect the audience? (The class is always the audience for this writing.)

__ __ 8. What sort of response are you looking for?

__ __ 9. Have you checked over and revised the draft copy before sharing it with your editorial group?

Yes/No **First Reader** (structure and organization of ideas)

__ __ 1. Can you identify the main idea of this piece?

__ __ 2. Does the author develop one or two aspects of the main idea?

__ __ 3. Does the author use examples, support, or illustration for each aspect of the main idea?

__ __ 4. Are there smooth transitions between ideas? Between paragraphs?

__ __ 5. Do you have a sense of satisfaction at the end of the essay?

__ __ 6. Of completion?

__ __ 7. Do you have any questions or doubts that need answering?

• **Checklists/Checkpoints**

Yes/No **Editor** (language and mechanics)

__ __ 1. Is the language concrete? Specific?

__ __ 2. Does the language make you as a reader, see? hear? taste? touch? smell?

__ __ 3. Are words used accurately?

__ __ 4. Are there unnecessary repetitions of words? Of ideas?

__ __ 5. Are all words spelled conventionally?

__ __ 6. Is conventional capitalization used?

__ __ 7. Is appropriate internal and end punctuation used?

__ __ 8. Is there subject-verb agreement in each sentence?

__ __ 9. Is there noun-pronoun agreement?

__ __ 10. Does each pronoun have a clear antecedent?

*Roth, Audrey. "Editorial Groups," 1979.

• Checklists/Checkpoints

SELF-METHOD REFLECTION CHECKPOINTS*

What is the best part of your paper? Why?

What part of your paper would you spend more time on if you had it? Why?

What one word, phrase, or idea deserves the "Right On Award" for exceptional choice?

What comment would you put on this paper if you were the teacher?

*Shadiow, Linda. "Eureka! Moments and Reflection Questions," 1979--1980.

• Checklists/Checkpoints

SELF-CHECK

Yes/No

__ __ 1. Does it make sense? Is it interesting?

__ __ 2. Does it have an introduction?

__ __ 3. Does it have a conclusion?

__ __ 4. Did I always use the most appropriate or interesting words?

__ __ 5. Did I use any words too often (and, then, so)?

__ __ 6. Do all sentences in a paragraph relate to one idea?

__ __ 7. Are my sentences varied in length, pattern and beginnings?

__ __ 8. Do the sentences tell a complete thought?

__ __ 9. Are capitals used where necessary?

__ __ 10. Did I use apostrophes, commas, quotation marks, periods, question marks where needed?

__ __ 11. Are all words spelled correctly?

__ __ 12. Are paragraphs indented?

*Helping Student Writers, Grades 7-12, 1980.

APPENDIX C: PROCEDURES

- "Rewrite" Procedure
- Engaging Peers in the Writing Process
- Writing Contract
- Writing Contract - Proofreading Record
- Peer Proofreading
- Publishing Students' Writing

• Procedure

"Rewrite" PROCEDURE*

R	Read work orally to self and/or others.
E	Examine/Evaluate content and form of work.
W	Write revision.
R	Read rewritten work.
I	Inspect for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting.
T	Take to teacher.
E	Evaluate final work.

*Helping Student Writers, Grades 7-12, 1980.

Engaging Peers in the Writing of Process

Beaven (1977) suggested this procedure to fostering peer interaction:

1. First stage. Students work in pairs on tasks that take 15 to 20 minutes to complete. (These tasks do not have to be related to writing or even English.) "Work with someone you do not know" and "Work with someone you have not worked with before" are criteria for selection of partners.

2. Second stage. Students work in groups of four on tasks for 15 to 20 minutes. Groups change with each task. A group of students working in front of the rest of the class can be used to model and shape desired group behavior. Roles (recorder, discussion leader, etc.) may be assigned. When all students seem accepted in these groups, the class progresses to the next stage.

3. Third stage. The teacher assigns students to groups for sustained projects. Evaluation procedures may be used to focus on group dynamics and interpersonal skills.

4. Fourth stage. Students select their own groups for sustained projects or support.

5. Fifth stage. Whenever necessary or appropriate, a class may return to a prior form of group work.

• **Procedure**

WRITING CONTRACT*

Part A: Requirements

Your composition mark this term will be based on the number of successfully completed compositions you submit to me during the term. In this contract a successfully completed composition is one which contains no more than ONE major sentence error, and no more than three other errors (spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, etc.). In addition, each composition must fulfill the individual assignment requirements in length, topic, and form. Assignments will be distributed as you require them.

Before the composition is submitted to me for credit, you should:

1. write a rough draft which you yourself check for errors.
2. have the composition proofread by two other people (at least one of whom must be a student in this English class) using the proofreading record sheet.
3. rewrite the composition and staple it to the rough copy and proofreading record sheet.

When I have checked your composition and marked it as being successfully completed you should:

4. put the completed composition in your folder.
5. indicate on the writing chart that you have completed this assignment.
6. begin the next assignment.

Part B: Marks

If you fulfill all of the above requirements you will receive 10 percent of the composition mark for each assignement successfully completed up to a maximum of 10 assignments, or 100 percent.

Part C: Agreement

I am aware of the requirements for obtaining credit for a successfully completed composition and that my composition mark will be based upon the number of these successfully completed compositions which I submit.

[OPTIONAL: Although I am entitled to change my mind at this time I would like to receive a mark of _____ percent for this part of the English course for Term ___.]

Signature _____ Date _____

*Gillian C. Bartlett, (1979) "The [illegible]iting Contract," p. 62

• Procedure

WRITING CONTRACT - PROOFREADING RECORD

Author: _____ Assignment No. _____

1st Proofreader: _____

2nd Proofreader: _____

Indicate in the appropriate column the number of errors found.

Error	1st Proofreader	2nd Proofreader
MAJOR:		
non-sentence	_____	_____
fused sentence	_____	_____
comma splice	_____	_____
run-on	_____	_____
MINOR:	_____	_____
spelling	_____	_____
punctuation	_____	_____
paragraphing	_____	_____
tense agreement	_____	_____
other	_____	_____

Does the composition fulfill the requirements of the assignment?

1st Proofreader _____ Yes _____ No (specifiy) _____

2nd Proofreader _____ Yes _____ No (specifiy) _____

*Gillian C. Bartlett, (1979) "The Writing Contract," p. 64.

• **Procedure**

PEER PROOFREADING*

The page below may be helpful to students in proofreading papers written by their peers. Each student editor would be responsible for one section; e.g., spelling, punctuation, etc. The technique for using this page can be found in Variation I "Editorial Group" of Peer Conferencing.

1. Peer Consultant: COMPLETE SENTENCES

   Comments:

---

2. Peer Consultant: PARAGRAPH

   Comments:

---

3. Peer Consultant: SPELLING

   Comments:

---

4. Peer Consultant: INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION

   Comments:

---

5. Peer Consultant: PUNCTUATION

   Comments:

---

6. Peer Consultant: CAPITALIZATION

   Comments:

---

7. Peer Consultant: REPEATING WORDS, BEGINNING OF SENTENCES

   Comments:

---

8. Peer Consultant USING VIVID WORDS

   Comments:

(This chart is adapted from the curriculum of Bronxville Elementary School.)

*Helping Student Writers Grades 7-12, 1980.

PUBLISHING STUDENTS' WRITING*

Publishing may take many forms some of which are listed below.

1. Classroom: Displays, bulletin boards, etc., class newspaper or magazine.

2. P.T.A. Newsletter or District News: Children's work published for the community.

3. Magazines/Newspapers: Local or community newspapers, children's national or local magazines.

4. Library: Children's work bound, cataloged and added to permanent collection in the school library.

5. Student Collection: Personal notebook, class collection (anthology of all their work).

6. Audio-Visual: Students make: filmstrips, slides, tapes, combination of sound and visual media.

7. Dramatic Presentations: Presentation of plays children have written.

8. Sharing: Reading original work to younger children, adults, or senior citizens.

*"Project W.R.I.T.E.," June, 1982.

APPENDIX D: CODING

- Proofreading Marks
- Proofreading Symbols
- Guide Sheet for Composition Correction

• Coding

PROOFREADING MARKS*

To ensure a smooth transition from one grade to the next it is recommended that a universal and consistent system of proofreading marks be used.

sp - spelling error

¶ - new paragraph

t - capitalization needed: put a box around small letter

^ - insert (caret)

( ) - empty box for missing queston mark (?)

⁀ - omit

Proofreading marks should be done in colored pencil or ink.

*"Project W.R.I.T.E." June, 1982

PROOFREADING SYMBOLS*

To develop a symbol list like the following, teachers should review students' writing and personalize the list by identifying their typical writing errors. Once the errors are identified, symbols are then assigned and students are familiarized with the symbol-error association. (Posting this list and/or developing individual student copies is helpful.)

ms - error in manuscript form or neatness
cap - error in use of capital letters
p - error in punctuation
sp - error in spelling
frag - sentence fragment
ss - error in sentence structure
k - awkward sentence
nc - not clear
rs - run-on sentence
gr - error in grammar
w - error in word choice
¶ - you should have begun a new paragraph here
t - error in tense
^ - you have omitted something
us - error in usage
pr - pronoun reference

*Chambers, (1981)

• Coding

GUIDE SHEET FOR COMPOSITION CORRECTION*

An uncircled number indicates the problem; for example, an uncircled #5 means you have a problem in paragraphing. A circled number and letter tell you where in the grammar text you will learn what the problem is and how to correct it; for example, a circled 3-b means to look in chapter 3 item b for an explanation of what the problem is and how to correct it.

1 - Spelling

2 - Run-on sentence

3 - Fragment - not a sentence

4 - Rambles on and on and on

5 - Paragraphing error is the symbol for paragraph

6 - Punctuation error - most often designated by circled numbers and letters

7 - Verb problem

8 - Lack of agreement - problem in agreement between subject and verb or pronoun and antecedent

9 - Pronoun reference

10 - Pronoun case

11 - Awkward - lacks smoothness; restate your idea

12 - Capitalization error

13 - Diction - vocabulary (word choice) problem

14 - Penmanship

15 - Italics - error in underlying

16 - Apostrophe error

17 - Continuity - The flow of your ideas is not smooth; you probably broke the thread by jumping from idea to idea; restate

18 - Vague - not clear

19 - Sloppy paper!

• **Coding**

20 - Not at all clear! - a much greater problem than #18; restate with care, clarity, and directness

21 - Slang - generally not acceptable

22 - Quotation marks error

23 - Degree of modifier error

24 - Style - usually caused by lack of variety in sentence structure

25 - Fact error

26 - Preposition choice

27 - Modifier error - dangling or misplaced

28 - Not relevant - does not relate; has nothing to do with what you have written; or has nothing to do with the topic

*Fred D. Rocchio, (1974) "Essay Correction: Teacher's Ease - Students' Profit."

Adaptation: The exact reference (Textbook title and page number(s)) from the current textbook(s) might be provided in a column to the right of the problem so students can quickly find the grammatical error and make the necessary corrections.

GLOSSARY

Analytic Scoring -- a scoring method requiring readers to isolate particular composition characteristics such as topic, rhetorical mode (narration, persuasion, etc.), organization, fluency, etc., and judge each characteristic without being influenced by any other characteristic. Analytic scoring often is used when there is a need for specific, discrete information about writers' strengths and weaknesses.

Assessment -- the process of describing the status of a student's writing ability at a particular time without value judgment.

Audience -- the reader of the written text. It can refer to the writer, as well as to others.

Brainstorming -- a prewriting activity that involves the open and uncritical sharing of ideas to generate and develop content for writing.

Climate -- the atmosphere surrounding the writer. A classroom climate conducive to writing is marked by trust, respect, supportiveness, suspension of judgment, and an enabling working environment.

Compositional Risks -- an attribute of the organization/content feature of the Registered Holistic Scoring Method. Compositional risks may include direct and indirect quotations; shifting roles; shifting times and events; varied sentence structure, such as "subject-not-first; prepositional phrases, adverbial clauses, participal phrases, infinitive phrases, and compound predicates, etc.; and varied sentence lengths.

Conferencing -- a method of teaching writing in which student and instructor or student and peer(s) confer privately or in the classroom on writing in progress. The instructor and the peer(s) help the student discover, shape, and polish written ideas and finally edit them into a finished piece. Conferencing can also be an evaluation method that centers on student involvement within the evaluation process by ensuring student understanding of the criteria used to evaluate writing.

Context -- comprised of all the circumstances surrounding the act of writing. These include: the author's perceptions of purpose, topic and the audience, as well as the author's perceptions of self as writer.

Descriptive Writing -- a traditional label for a rhetorical mode of communication that may be rooted in the expressive, transactional or poetic functions of language. Depending on purpose, the writer may depict the features of an object, scene, place, or person in a variety of ways ranging from relatively objective reporting to rather selective description to convey a mood. Ideas are usually arranged in space order or order of importance.

Diagnosing -- the process of analyzing students' writing to identify strengths and needs so that the teacher can develop strategies to meet identified needs and improve student writing.

Discourse -- an extended verbal expression in speech and writing.

Drafting -- a stage of the writing process which precedes the revising and editing stages and results in a written draft. Students are encouraged to write with attention to purpose, audience, content, and organization during this stage.

Editing -- polishing the writing for reader understanding. This stage involves correcting and proofreading the writing for usage, mechanics, and spelling. The editing stage follows the revising stage.

Evaluation - the process of describing the student's writing ability at a particular time in reference to a standard and assigning a value to a performance. It involves judging the effectiveness of a process, product, or program, and may include recommending a preferred course of action.

Expository Writing -- a traditional label for a rhetorical mode of communication usually rooted in the expressive or transactional functions of language. This mode is considered academic writing, but it is also found in the workplace. Depending on purpose, the writer reports, discusses, explains, speculates and/or evaluates a subject. Ideas are typically arranged in a hierarchy of superordinate and subordinate details that also can be arranged chronologically as in a supporting example.

Expressive Language -- an approach a student may use to produce written work and answer the question "Why Am I Writing?" It is a written language function closest to self and ssumes a shared context and knowledge with an interested audience. This function serves as a link between speech and writing and is exhibited in journals and diaries.

Fictive/Creative Writing -- requires the writer to step outside of personal experiences to compose through invention and imagination.

Holistic Scoring -- the reading of essay papers for an overall or "whole" impression of the papers by at least two trained readers. The basic premise of holistic scoring is that if scorers read each paper as a whole, they are better able to judge the competence of the writer in relationship to other writers responding to the same topic. The holistic scoring technique is based on the assumption that the overall quality of the writing is more important than the sum of its parts. (The Educational Testing Service and the National Assessment of Educational Progress are pioneers of this version of "pure" holistic scoring.)

Literacy -- the ability to read and write; interpreted differently in various contexts so that literacy for college students is quite different from literacy for immigrants.

Mode -- a form or type of written text. Representative modes include: narrative, expository, persuasive, argumentative, etc.

Narrative Writing -- a traditional label for a rhetorical mode of communication that may be rooted, in the expressive, transactional, or poetic functions of language. Depending on purpose, the writer may recount a real event or fabricate an imagined story. Ideas are arranged chronologically from beginning to end, exemplified in media reports or in simultaneous accounts of events.

Peer Feedback -- the opportunity for peers to provide oral or written responses to an author about a piece of written discourse.

Persuasive Writing -- a traditional label for a rhetorical mode of communication rooted in the transactional function of language. The student-writer attempts to influence the behavior or ideas of an audience concerning some topic. Ideas may be arranged mainly in a hierarchy of superordinate and subordinate details, but some section of support may contain chronological ordering of ideas.

Poetic Language -- an approach a student may use to produce written work and answer the question, "Why Am I Writing?" It is a written language in which how something is written is as important as what is said. A verbal artifact is created by using language to recount or recreate real or imagined events for no other reason that to enjoy it or present it for employment.

Post-Writing -- the fifth essential stage of the recursive writing process. This stage serves a two-fold purpose by focusing on both the value of a given student's writing and the student's developmental strengths and needs as a writer. The recursiveness of the writing process is inherent at this stage because it can stimulate the student to write again.

Prewriting -- consists of the mental, verbal, and physical experiences that lead to the composing/drafting stage. Examples of prewriting experiences are: reflecting, discussing personal experiences, conducting experiments, and responding to what someone else has written. It may also include outlining, drawing/doodling, webbing, and notetaking.

Primary Trait -- a scoring method that identifies a dominant or primary characteristic for each writing task, and compositions are rated according to how well they fulfill the purpose of that particular task. For example descriptive essays might require detailed character descriptions while narrative essays may require a specific chronological order of events.

Process-Centered Approach -- an approach that teaches composing by focusing on some type of process, either within the student or related to an instructional sequence such as the five stages of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and post-writing.

Product-Based Approach -- an approach that intends to assess the quality of students' writing and not intervene with but foster the process of writing. It is an approach suitable for selecting writing samples and applying scoring methods such as holistic, analytic, primary trait, and others.

Proofreading -- the final check during the editing stage to ensure that the product is free of errors.

Purpose -- the author's reason for writing. It addresses the "why" for the writing as opposed to the "what."

Recursive -- the quality of writing which is characterized by its cyclical nature. The stages and procedures in writing instruction may be repeated indefinitely or until a desired standard is attained. The steps in learning to write are all equally recursive.

Registered Holistic Scoring Method -- a large scale assessment scoring method developed by the New Jersey State Department of Education that is used by two independent readers to judge writers' command of written language on a 1 (inadequate command) to 6 (strong command) score scale. The features of the scoring guide criteria are: organization/content, usage, sentence construction, and mechanics. The first focus of raters is to the feature or organization/content, with a readjustment of that score according to the severity of errors or error patterns in usage, sentence construction, and/or mechanics.

Revising -- a process of discovery. Revising occurs when the writer revisits the text. During this third stage, the writer evaluates the content and form of the text and may reformulate the piece of writing.

Rhetorical Mode of Communication -- a heuristic or guideline which takes into account the relations among speaker-writer, audience, purpose, subject matter, and context in helping writers explore each of these aspects and formulate effective written or formal spoken communication.

T-Unit Analysis -- a scoring method that judges the maturity of the writer by dividing students' writing into T-Units (independent clauses with all their subordinate clauses or phrases) and analyzing them for length, number of words, etc. The method can also be used by having students combine a group of related T-Units into one or more sentences so that the maturity of the writer is judged by examining the syntactic complexity of the sentences produced (Hunt, 1965).

Transactional Language -- an approach a student may use to produce written work and answer the question, "Why Am I Writing?" It is a written language function that demands a different task from the writer since it is language to get things done. It is writing which informs, instructs, persuades and carries on business.

Webbing -- a prewriting activity in which writers generate and group ideas and concepts in terms of their superordinate, coordinate, and subordinate relationships. Teachers involve students in webbing to help them plan writing -- to elaborate their ideas, to narrow them to a manageable topic, and to organize the subtopics. Webbing is also referred to as mapping or scaffolding.

Writing Mechanics Analysis -- a scoring method that is "error-focused" and offers no feedback on what is written, that is, context or organization. This method indicates errors in usage or mechanical conventions of standard English and is appropriate when the student is at a point in language development where attention to such matters is appropriate.

Writing Sample -- a piece of writing elicited periodically for the purpose of evaluation.

Written Discourse -- the sustained use of written language. Written discourse is synonymous with written text.

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This document is one of several produced by the New Jersey State Department of Education to respond to districts' identified needs for improved writing instruction. Regional Curriculum Service Units (RCSUs) offer training to accompany these materials. Other writing documents published include:

- Staff Development Guide and Reference Handbook: New Jersey Statewide Writing Assessment Program (1983)
- Improving Writing Instruction A Process Approach - A Staff Training Manual for Use with the Maryland Instructional Television Series "Teaching Writing: A Process Approach" (1984)
- Writing in the Content Areas: A Guide for Instructional Improvement (1984)
- Understanding the Writing Process: Introducing Students to Composing (1985)
- The Registered Holistic Scoring Method for Scoring Student Essays (1985)
- The Registered Holistic Scoring Method for Scoring Student Essays: Scoring Guide for Training (1985)

FEEDBACK FORM

CONFERENCING: ASSESSING GROWTH AND CHANGE IN STUDENTS' WRITING

The New Jersey State Department of Education would appreciate your response after you review this resource book. Please answer the questions below and make any other comment you consider important. Wherever possible give examples. Your response will be most welcome.

Your Position: _____ Current Grade Level(s) _____
Years in Teaching _____ Highest Degree _____ Certification _____

A. What use, if any, have you made of the approaches described in this resource book in your classroom teaching?

B. In particular, how has or might the approaches of this resource book affect your ways of responding to student writing?

C. How do you think this resource book could be improved?

D. What additional information or materials might help you relate the approach to your teaching?

E. What follow-up workshop session(s) organized around this resource book would be most effective for you?

F. How and with whom have you shared this resource book within your district?

G. Other observations and remarks:

(Optional)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please return this feedback sheet to your RCSU workshop leader or mail to:

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New Jersey State Department of Education
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